

# OPEN AND SHUT?

Monday, July 23, 2012

## The OA Interviews: Martin Hall, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Salford, and member of the Finch Committee on OA

The past month has seen a flurry of activity in the Open Access (OA) space, most of it focused on the UK.



Martin Hall, Vice-Chancellor, University of Salford

Events were triggered by the publication on 18<sup>th</sup> June of the eagerly awaited [Finch Report](#). Chaired by [Dame Janet Finch](#), a sociologist at the University of Manchester, the Finch Committee was [set up last year](#) by the UK Minister for Universities and Science [David Willetts](#), who asked it to consider how access to research could be expanded in the UK.

As I [noted](#) last week, the Committee concluded that a clear policy direction should be set towards supporting publication in [gold OA](#) or [hybrid](#) journals, funded by APCs, as the main vehicle for the publication of research.

To understand the reaction that the Committee's proposals have received from some in the research community we need to remember that when the OA movement was born – with the 2004 Budapest Open Access Initiative (BOAI) – two complementary strategies were agreed: BOAI-1 and BOAI-2, now more usually referred to as [green OA](#) (self-archiving) and [gold OA](#) (OA journals).

Gold OA generally implies that instead of *charging readers* to access scholarly journals (by means of subscriptions), publishers *charge authors*, or their funders or institutions, to publish their papers (via an article-processing charge, or APC). This allows publishers to make research papers immediately and freely available on the Internet.

With green OA, researchers continue to publish in subscription journals (without payment), but also self-archive their papers in their [institutional repository](#), usually after an embargo period. This approach means that researchers can make their papers freely available themselves.

What was radical (and surprising) about the Finch Report was that it proposed abandoning BOAI's double-pronged strategy in favour of an exclusively gold approach. As such, it downgraded green OA and institutional repositories to bit players merely, "providing access to research data and to grey literature" and assisting in digital preservation.

Where self-archiving did continue to take place, Finch suggested, it would be unfair on publishers if the papers they published were self-archived before a 12-month embargo had elapsed (except where the publisher provided no mechanism to pay for gold OA).

### Protest

The report sparked a firestorm of protest, with many researchers [bridling](#) at the thought of having to pay to publish all their papers, and green OA advocates [expressing dismay](#) that all the time and hard work that had been put into building a network of institutional repositories, had been so casually dismissed.

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**Council OA Big**  
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It did not help that Finch estimated its proposals would cost the UK research community an additional £50-60 million a year. Since in the current economic climate there is no hope of receiving additional funding from the UK government, universities would have to find these extra costs from their existing budgets.

Moreover, as the cost burden would primarily fall on the Russell Group universities, the Report has proved somewhat divisive.

David Price, Vice-Provost (Research), University College London (UCL), has been particularly critical. "The result of the Finch recommendations would be to cripple university systems with extra expense," he said to me on the day the report was published. "Finch is certainly a cure to the problem of access, but is it not a cure which is actually worse than the disease?"

Discontent was fuelled further by the publication on July 5<sup>th</sup> of a report commissioned by the UK Open Access Implementation Group (OAIG). This revealed that green OA could provide a much more cost-effective route to OA than gold. Specifically, the report concluded, if the UK undertook a unilateral move to gold OA the cost to large research intensive institutions (i.e. Russell Group universities) would be about £1.7 million a year. A unilateral move to green OA, by contrast, would cost them only around £100,000 a year.

These turbulent waters were further muddled on July 16<sup>th</sup>, when Research Councils UK (RCUK) announced its new OA policy. RCUK had ignored the Finch recommendations, reinstating green OA as an equal partner to gold, and insisting that publishers be given no more than a 6-month embargo (except for humanities and social science papers).

In fact, suggested OA advocate Peter Suber, the RCUK policy reverses Finch, favouring green over gold. And where RCUK makes clear what CC licences should be used, Suber added, Finch is vague "about what license to require (or what reuse rights to demand) when taxpayers pay the costs of publication."

To add to the drama, RCUK's new policy was published just hours before David Willetts announced his acceptance of all the Finch proposals, bar one on VAT rates for e-journals. Unsurprisingly perhaps, OA advocates concluded that the timing was no accident.

Then to cap it all, the next day (17<sup>th</sup> July) the European Commission issued a Communication proposing a Europe-wide OA strategy that essentially mimics the RCUK policy.

## Clear parallels

Where this leaves the Finch recommendations remains unclear. What is clear is that while publishers and advocates of gold OA have welcomed its proposals, the Finch committee has faced a good deal of criticism.

OA advocates like Stevan Harnad, for instance, have suggested that the Committee succumbed to lobbying by publishers. Lobbying is perhaps the wrong term, but the Committee did include a number of publishers, and publishers have, in the main, fought tooth and nail to thwart the growth of green OA.

By contrast, there were no publishers involved in the RCUK decision. As Suber put it, "All the decision-makers were RCUK officials whose mission is to fund research with public money in the public interest."

The virulence of the criticism appears to have caught committee members by surprise. Initially stressing the consensual manner in which the Finch proposals had been agreed, they subsequently found themselves having to go on the offensive – arguing, for instance, that there is very little difference between the Finch recommendations and the RCUK policy (or, indeed, the EC proposals).

Committee members have also sought to downplay the cost implications of the Report, pointing out that they will not all arise from gold OA charges, and that the additional costs will only be incurred during the transition period. Moreover, they stress, once gold OA becomes universal the overall cost to the research community will fall, with OA eventually proving less expensive than subscription publishing.

In in a letter published in the Times Higher Education on July 5<sup>th</sup>, the Wellcome Trust's Robert Kiley described the criticisms as "shorted-sighted", and suggested

Alternatives, explained why he believes the var...



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## Babu Gedela

\*\*\*Update: On August 26th 2016, the US government (Federal Trade Commission) announced that it has charged OMICS with making false claims, ...



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Community Action Publishing: Broadening the Pool

We are today seeing growing dissatisfaction with the pay-to-publish model

that those complaining about the Report “fail to appreciate the benefits that open access will bring.”

And on 18<sup>th</sup> July, Kiley [posted](#) a message on the [GOAL mailing list](#) insisting that there are “clear parallels” between the Finch recommendations and RCUK’s OA policy.

Another member of the committee who has sought to take on the critics is [Adam Tickell](#), Pro-Vice Chancellor Research at the University of Birmingham. On 17<sup>th</sup> July, for instance, he posted a comment on an article in the *Times Higher Education* reporting on the EC’s policy, in which he [said](#), “The EU’s policy, as announced today is exactly the same as the approach articulated by the UK government yesterday and there is no contrast between them, with the exception that [BIS](#) will allow longer embargo periods than the EU where no funds are available for APCs”.

And in a letter to the *Times Higher Education* published on 19<sup>th</sup> July, Tickell [pointed out](#) that a compromise had been necessary. He concluded, “[A]t a time when the science vote is looking vulnerable, the sector can, at least, demonstrate that we are contributing to the public and economic good in our support for open access.”

In short, Finch committee members believe that critics have misunderstood and misrepresented their proposals. These critics, however, remain [unconvinced](#) by such claims.

Interestingly, one issue that might be thought to have potentially important consequences for the research community has received far less attention – that is, the possibility that, if its recommendations were acted on, the Finch Report could lead to less research being published.

The topic was raised in the *Times Higher Education* on 21<sup>st</sup> June, in an article entitled, “Open access may require funds to be rationed”. However, there appears to have been little subsequent discussion of it.

We should note that in the *Times Higher Education* article Tickell suggested that fewer papers might not be such a bad thing. As he put it, “Quite a large number of people publish a huge volume of papers. If they were to reduce that, it may not make any significant difference to the integrity of the science base.”

## Rationing?

A third committee member to comment publicly has been [Martin Hall](#), Vice-Chancellor of the University of Salford Manchester. Speaking to the *Times Higher Education* on 5<sup>th</sup> July, Hall argued that it was the importance of having access to the “version of record” of papers, plus the ability to carry out [text](#) and [data](#) mining, that had “tipped the balance” in favour of gold open access.

To explore Hall’s ideas in greater depth I invited him to do an email interview, which I publish below.

While Hall conceded that the Finch recommendations could be expected to have “collateral damage” – on independent researchers, humanities scholars and scientists in the developing world for instance – he appeared less willing to be drawn on the issue of rationing.

In questioning Hall on the latter point I quoted a [conversation](#) I had last year with David Sweeney, the Director of Research Innovation and Skills at the Higher Education Funding Council for England ([HEFCE](#)). Sweeney was also a member of the Finch committee.

Hall responded by (correctly) pointing out that my question conflated the more general issue of affordability (which the research community has been grappling with for several decades) with the likelihood that Finch’s recommendations could lead to paper rationing.

Nevertheless, funders like HEFCE do seem increasingly inclined to take the view that too many papers are published today. As such, it is hard not to conclude that they will treat author-pays OA as an opportunity to reduce the flow of papers.

for open access. As this requires authors (or their funders or ins...



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That concern about affordability is conjoined with the topic of gold OA in the minds of HEFCE personnel is surely evidenced by recent comments made by Sweeney's colleague at HEFCE [Paul Hubbard](#). In an [article](#) dated 19<sup>th</sup> July, the *Times Higher Education* reports that Hubbard told delegates at a [Society for Research into Higher Education event](#) held on July 12<sup>th</sup> that, in his view, academics should aim to use journals only to record claims of ownership of significant findings.

He then added, "I would encourage you to ask whether going through the complexity and delay of writing an article, having it peer-reviewed and possibly paying the journal to publish it is worth it."

It is of course understandable that Hall should prefer to talk about the potential gains of OA rather than dwell on hypothetical problems. And he is keen to stress that these gains more than justify some temporary pain. As he put it, "If short term compromises are not made, future research will be stunted by the persistence of pay-walls and similar restrictions."

(We should note in passing that the possibility that papers might be rationed arises with gold OA *per se*, not just with the Finch recommendations – which was partly Hall's point perhaps).

Few now deny the huge potential of OA. The desirability of the destination is therefore no longer the issue. What is at issue is how one arrives at that destination. Critics of the Finch Report argue that it has seriously underestimated the benefits of green OA – which, they maintain, offers a much faster journey, and a far less costly one at that.

What we should not doubt is that there will be a good deal more controversy and disagreement before the OA revolution is complete. But then, as Hall points out, "Lively disagreement results in good outcomes."

Let's hope so.

## The interview begins ...

**RP:** *You were a member of the committee that published the [Finch Report](#). As I understand it, you were there as a representative of the Open Access Implementation Group (OAIG). The aim of the OAIG is "to increase the rate at which the outputs from UK research are available on OA terms." Would I be right, therefore, to conclude that you are an OA advocate?*

**MH:** Yes, I am

**RP:** *How is OAIG funded?*

**MH:** OAIG is an informal group that brings together a range of organizations with an interest in Open Access, including the British Library, the [Wellcome Trust](#), the UK Research Councils, Libraries and JISC.

We don't have any direct funding and rather raise support on a project-by-project basis, where this is necessary.

**RP:** *The UK government has [accepted](#) all the Finch proposals, bar one calling for journals to be zero-rated for VAT purposes. Do you personally agree with all the Finch recommendations, or are there some aspects of the report that you have doubts about?*

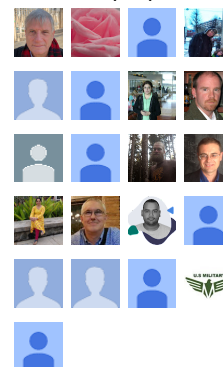
**MH:** I support all the recommendations in the report.

**RP:** *There are two main types of OA: [green OA](#) and [gold OA](#). There is also an intermediate version called [hybrid OA](#) – where researchers can pay to publish in subscription journals in order to ensure that their papers are not locked behind a subscription paywall. Finch favoured gold and hybrid, saying, "a clear policy direction should be set towards support for publication in open access or hybrid journals, funded by APCs, as the main vehicle for the publication of research, especially when it is publicly funded." On green OA, Finch recommended that it should only play "a complementary role to formal publishing, particularly in providing access to research data and to grey literature, and in digital preservation." I am struck that Nature recently published a [chart](#) indicating that 5% of the 85,215 papers published by UK researchers in 2010 were made available via*

2010 (20)  
2009 (22)  
2008 (14)  
2007 (9)  
2006 (27)  
2005 (31)  
2004 (2)

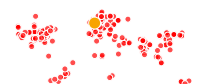
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**gold OA, and 35% by means of green OA. Given green's greater penetration, why did Finch prioritise gold?**

**MH:** Well, first of all it's important to recognize that there are a number of varieties of green OA as well – green means different things to different people; for some, it's an argument that all research outputs should be free at the point of use as a matter of principle, while for others, it's the availability of the last version over which the author holds copyright, before surrendering copyright to a publisher.

It's also important to watch out for the context in which green is evoked. In some arguments, green is advocated as the alternative to subscription publishing. But for others, the argument is made to have green in conjunction with a "national licence", a policy that, if implemented, would perpetuate for-profit subscription publishing.

My preference would be to drop "gold" and "green", and rather differentiate between, on the one hand, full and upfront APCs and, on the other-hand, subscriptions, licences and other forms of pay-walls that restrict access.

Seen from this standpoint, the Finch Group's preference for full upfront APCs ("gold") is because this is the only form of open access that, when widely implemented, will allow open access at the point of use to the version of record and, in this, will also allow the forms of automated and advanced **text** and **data** mining that will be of crucial importance to the health of major areas of research in the future.

**RP: The Finch Report says, "[W]e believe that it would be unreasonable to require embargo periods of less than twelve months." I note on your blog recently you **said**, "[P]ublic interest in publicly-funded research must be that these restrictions are short-lived and perhaps no longer than six months." Is this not an issue where you depart from Finch?**

**MH:** No – the underlying thinking behind this aspect of the Finch Report is that embargo periods for publicly-funded research that is not fully Open Access should be as short as possible.

But we also recognize concerns that if embargo periods are too short this may erode a journal's subscription base. We have very little credible and independent research in this area – hence the caution.

**RP: Have you been surprised by the sometimes bitter criticism that the recommendations have attracted from advocates of green OA, or had you anticipated such criticism? Is it par for the course in circumstances like this?**

**MH:** These are issues about which people feel passionately, for all the right reasons. I think that the levels of criticism are pretty typical of academic life in general.

**RP: When in June you gave a presentation at a **RSP conference** you spoke of "collateral damage" emerging from the Finch Report. You cited, for instance, the negative impact you anticipated it could have on the humanities and independent researchers. You added that it was not possible to know the size of that collateral damage. Can you expand on that, and say whether your concerns have increased or lessened?**

**MH:** Yes – there are risks here. The Finch Group had a specific brief and there were bound to be areas that we could not cover. A lot more work needs to be done on the future of the scholarly monograph – and this is particularly important for the Humanities.

Independent researchers are finding it more and more difficult to publish, and ways need to be found that provide appropriate access to funds for independent researchers, for full APCs. And some of the specialized societies that currently publish subscription journals are going to find the transition hard.

These are real concerns that need attention.

## Consensus

**RP: When I spoke to Graham Taylor of the Publishers Association he **said** that the Finch committee was composed of delegates from all relevant**

*stakeholders, including research funders, learned societies, libraries, research institutes and publishers. I assume the aim was to reach a consensus that all stakeholders could sign up to. Indeed, Adam Tickell, one of the committee members, later told the Times Higher Education, “We ended up with a very much more consensual set of outcomes than any of us anticipated at the beginning.” Inevitably, however, concessions were made. What concessions did publishers make, and what concessions did universities have to make?*

**MH:** I wouldn’t agree that we were representative. There are many different kinds of publishers, and a wide range of university interests. We were not appointed to represent identified organizations such as university Mission Groups. This was an advantage; after all, this is not an area that has previously moved towards consensus – indeed, quite the opposite.

I can’t speak for the publishers. As far as the universities are concerned, I agree with Adam’s assessment. The compromise for some universities – particularly those that are research intensive – is that they will have initial costs during the transition.

However, as research leaders such as the Wellcome Trust have shown, the payoff will be immense. Opening up major research fields such as computational biology will replicate the payback from projects such as the [mapping of the Human Genome](#), many times over.

If short term compromises are not made, future research will be stunted by the persistence of pay-walls and similar restrictions.

**RP:** *Moving to OA in the manner envisaged by Finch will impact different institutions in different ways. Speaking to the Times Higher Education Ian Walmsley, Pro Vice-Chancellor for Research at the University of Oxford, said that it could see his institution’s annual spending on publications rise by as much as 350 per cent, because Oxford academics typically publish in high-prestige journals. These are likely to charge high article fees. Does he have a point?*

**MH:** Yes – but only during the transition. If Oxford wants to maintain its global lead in key areas of science research, it needs to push for a system in which research results, and data, are openly available for current and future breakthroughs in text and data mining, and for the open linking of research publications with data sets and analytic capabilities.

**RP:** *When I spoke to UCL’s Vice-Provost (Research) David Price he evidently felt that Finch expects universities to concede more than is fair, or rational, and that OA may end up being achieved at too high a cost. As he put it, “The result of the Finch recommendations would be to cripple university systems with extra expense. Finch is certainly a cure to the problem of access, but is it not a cure which is actually worse than the disease?” Would I be right to think you do not agree? If so, what does Price fail to appreciate?*

**MH:** I don’t agree. David Price advocates the continuation of access to pre-publication versions of papers, combined with a “national licence”. A “national licence” – making all subscription journals available free at the point of use to everyone on-line anywhere in the UK – would be hugely expensive, and would perpetuate the present system of for-profit, private benefit academic publishing.

It would result in an academic publishing system analogous to the control of most High Street banking by the Big Five banks, and would encourage cartels and “[Big Deals](#)” that allow the cross-subsidization of very expensive, small circulation journals – much the sort of thing that those [boycotting Elsevier](#) have been complaining about.

I’ve been surprised by David’s stance on this, since the Finch Report actually delivers what he’s asked for – a recommendation for particular licence extensions during the transition to full up-front APCs to allow access to subscription journals to medical research in the NHS, for example, or by government employed researchers not affiliated to universities.

**RP:** *As you say, Price is an advocate for a national licensing approach combined with green OA. The Finch Report does recommend some “licence extensions”, but not national licensing as such. What is the distinction here, and what in your view are the pros and cons of a national licensing approach?*

**MH:** Very few countries have instituted national licences. A national licence would build in huge redundancies.

For example, how many people outside of the science research community need access to licenced copies of specialized journals in Physics, or any other field for that matter?

A national licence would be difficult to implement without leakage; if a hacker on the other side of the world can take over a server in a British institution, as happens on a daily basis, how will users be restricted to addresses in the UK?

Publishers deal with leakage by increasing subscription and licencing costs to compensate for the loss of business (rather like insurance companies) – and understandably so. Sectoral licence extensions are much easier to administer, which is why we recommended them.

**RP:** *Can you clarify what you mean by sectoral licence extensions, and how they would differ from a national licence? Are you saying that such licences would be discipline specific?*

**MH:** A sectoral licence (as we've used this term in the report) is more likely to apply to a category of researchers who do not presently have the benefits of institutionally negotiated licences – in other words, they do not have the benefits that university based researchers have, when their access to subscription journals appears to be free at the point of use because, in the background, university-wide licences have been negotiated and paid for, usually by means of the service provided by JISC Collections.

## Transitional costs

**RP:** *So moving to OA using the Finch strategy would see research-intensive universities like Oxford and UCL (members of the so-called Russell Group) incur the greatest cost increases? What financial impact would you expect it to have on your university, the University of Salford?*

**MH:** As I've indicated, modelling indicates that the transitional costs will bear more heavily on research intensive universities.

The transition will probably be cost neutral for a university like mine. But then, on the other hand, we have been penalized disproportionately by the concentration of research funding and the in-cycle adjustments to [HEFCE QR funding](#). The more important point is the overall benefit to the research system in moving to open access.

**RP:** *I think Price feels that green OA would provide a more cost-effective transitional strategy. You do not agree?*

**MH:** Green OA is not a transitional strategy – as I've indicated, an approach that does not push towards full, up-front APCs will not result in genuine open access, where the version of record is free, under a CC-BY licence, at the point of use.

**RP:** *David Price is also a member of the OAIG. Are OAIG meetings are a little lively, or likely to be so in the future?*

**MH:** Lively disagreement results in good outcomes.

**RP:** *Shortly after the Finch Report was published, the OAIG published a report called "Going for Gold?" This concluded that a unilateral move to gold open access would cost large research intensives about £1.7 million a year, while a unilateral move to green open access would cost even research intensive institutions only around £100,000 a year. Do you agree with these figures?*

**MH:** This is a partial summary of what "Going for Gold" found.

These differentials were cost estimates during the transition. Once full and upfront APC publishing is ubiquitous, the intermediation costs of production must, at least, equalize, for the simple reason that the production and distribution costs will all have shifted up front.

I would also expect the overall net costs of intermediation to diminish, because up-front APCs put authors far more in control of acceptable charges, drive

innovation (as we are already seeing) and limit the possibilities for excessive profit taking, that we've seen with some academic publishers.

**RP:** *The Finch Report estimates that its recommendations would increase costs for the UK research community by an additional £50-60 million a year during the transition. The key issue, of course, is whether these additional costs did prove to be merely transitional, or whether gold OA will prove no less expensive as subscription publishing. You believe it will be cheaper. However, you have argued on your blog that to achieve this it will be necessary for the market to be unregulated. If it is, gold OA prices will fall over time. What is your thinking here?*

**MH:** It's important to read the Finch Report carefully with regard to the estimate of transitional costs and the way in which they were estimated, as Robert Kiley has pointed out in a good letter to the *THE*.

The proposed approach to managing APC costs across British universities follows the precedent of the Wellcome Trust, which has pioneered this. We have proposed that universities that receive publicly-funded grants should receive block publication funding from the Research Councils, that they should administer at their discretion.

This will ensure that researchers are far closer to the relationship between the cost of publication and the appropriateness and prestige of an individual journal than they are at present; under the present system, access appears to be free at the point of use because the payment of licencing fees via library consortia is, for all practical purposes, invisible to the research community.

Put simply, if a journal charges outrageous APCs, then leading researchers should walk away and publish elsewhere; no journal can survive being abandoned by research stars.

In turn, this closer attention to publication costs and options by the research community will drive innovation across the publishing industry. Look at the way that this is happening in the film and music industry, as well as with e-books. Creating an innovation-rich environment invariably drives down costs.

## Dire warnings

**RP:** *Nevertheless, the editor-in-chief of Nature Philip Campbell has predicted that if gold OA became the norm it would require journals like Nature, Cell and Science to charge in excess of \$10,000 per paper. That presumably is the point that Walmsley was making. Given the very significant boost to a scientist's career that publication in prestigious journals like these can provide is it not likely that researchers would inevitably be willing to pay that much. And if those journals were charging that much, would not less prestigious journals be able to charge somewhat more than \$889 envisaged in Going for Gold?*

**MH:** These dire warnings of excessive APCs are based on the argument that popular journals have high rejection rates, and therefore high costs of processing rejected papers. In essence, they are saying to authors whose papers are accepted that they must cover the costs of processing the 90% of papers that are turned down.

This argument tends to ignore the fact that much of the work of reviewing papers is provided at no, or nominal, charge by the academic community in the first place. As a number of discipline-based innovations have shown, there are a number of ways in which these intermediation costs could be offset.

But also remember that the Finch Group recommendation is that each university should have discretion over how its pool of funds for APCs is spent. This would allow a comparatively small number of APC publications in high-cost, high prestige journals to be offset by publications elsewhere. Remember, it's the average APC across an institution that matters.

**RP:** *Clearly, one of the challenges that confronted the Finch Committee was to come up with a national (unilateral) solution for a research environment that is truly global. Can you say something about the complexities of having to act unilaterally in this way, and your views on these complexities?*

**MH:** We need to be careful of British hubris here. The move towards Open Access



is a global movement, advocated across both wealthy, research-intensive systems and by those at the front line of research in marginalized and developing economies. Researchers respect the boundaries of their disciplines and their fields of study much more than national boundaries, and thank goodness they do.

Open Access is an inevitable consequence of the massive expansion of digital capacity and capabilities – as the film and music industries have found, the digital world demands new approaches to distribution and to the management of costs and revenues.

While there will be imbalances during the transition, as some journals hang on to outdated pay-wall models, early adoption of Open Access puts a discipline or field of research in a lead position, irrespective of the national locations of individual researchers or institutions.

**RP:** *Some might argue that by proposing a model in which it is assumed that researchers always have to pay to publish, one consequence of Finch could be that researchers in the developing world find themselves locked out of the research process, becoming passive observers rather than active participants? I am thinking, for instance, that if author-pays gold OA became the norm researchers at financially-constrained institutions in the developing world would be unable to publish their research?*

**MH:** This is certainly a risk. But, despite important concessions made by commercial publishers, many researchers in the developing world are already locked out because of licencing fees.

Open access on a CC-BY basis will bring a broad democracy of access to research outputs, while new developments in text and data mining will have major advances to marginalized areas of enquiry, such as aspects of epidemiology.

Researchers in the developing world are often key partners in international research collaborations since they are essential for expert knowledge and access to key data sets. By publishing with colleagues in richly-financed research systems, APC costs can be covered.

## Running in the same direction

**RP:** *Speaking to the Times Higher Education recently, you said that you supported the Gold approach because it is important that researchers have access to the “version of record” of papers, and because gold allows papers to be “mined”. This, you said, “tipped the balance” in favour of gold. Recently, OA advocate Peter Suber pointed out that, contrary to popular belief, around 88% of OA journals do not use CC-BY – which is what people feel is necessary if papers are to be free for mining (libre OA). Moreover, Suber argued, libre green OA is currently growing more quickly than libre gold OA. Suber concluded, “[T]he recent upturn in libre green progress has no counterpart libre gold progress.” Does this surprise you?*

**MH:** As I’ve already pointed out, “green” is a messy category that allows claims that a paper is open access even though there are restrictions on re-use. Similarly, hybrid options, which may be termed “gold”, also restrict re-use.

This is why it would be much better to have clean policies which push for full, upfront APCs and CC-BY licences. I would hope that key organizations such as the Research Councils and HEFCE make this clear in their specifications of acceptable publication of publicly funded research.

**RP:** *As we noted earlier, the Finch Report calls for both gold OA and hybrid OA. You say that hybrid journals may restrict re-use. In fact, I do not think that any hybrid OA journal uses a CC-BY licence. Moreover, their average charge is more like \$3,000 than the £571 (\$889) estimated in Going for Gold? Might Finch have been better to caution against the use of hybrid OA?*

**MH:** Good point. I don’t see the use for hybrid models if policies push for full, upfront APCs.

**RP:** *Some have suggested that one possible outcome of the Finch Report is that the number of papers researchers are able to publish could be rationed, either by their institution or by their funder. Adam Tickell suggested as much in the Times Higher Education. As he put it, “Quite a large number of people publish a huge volume of papers. If they were to reduce that, it may*

*not make any significant difference to the integrity of the science base.” Do you expect to see paper rationing? If so, would that be a good thing or a bad thing?*

MH: The Finch Report recommends that Research Councils make APC publication funds available to universities in proportion to the research grants that a university receives. This is not rationing. The other way of looking at this is that this system would require universities to discriminate on the grounds of quality. Would this be bad?

*RP: Was not Adam Tickell’s point that because universities will have only a set sum of money to use on APCs, they might limit the number of papers that a researcher can publish each year. This also seems to be the point that HEFCE’s David Sweeney made to me last year: part of the problem today, he suggested, is that too many papers are being published. Do you agree? Might rationing be a good thing?*

MH: David Sweeney has made this as a general point, irrespective of whether papers are open access or available only through subscription. The implication is that a proportion of publications are not of sufficient quality to warrant their release. This is an important – but distinct – issue for consideration.

Adam and David’s points are different, and conflating questions about the appropriate form of Open Access with concerns about inappropriate incentives to publish is to confuse both issues.

*RP: The RCUK published its new OA policy shortly before David Willetts accepted the Finch Recommendations. The RCUK policy appears to differ somewhat from Finch. For instance, it has reinstated green OA as an equal partner to gold, and it has adopted a 6-month embargo rather than a 12-month embargo. What are we to make of these differences? Do you think RCUK will plough its own furrow, ignoring the UK government recommendations? If so, what effect do you think that will have for the development of OA in the UK?*

MH: It was not up to the Finch Group to tell the Research Councils what to do, and we did not do so.

Similarly, the government’s response to the Finch Report allows the Research Councils full and appropriate latitude in setting their conditions for the receipt of grant funding.

All these furrows are running in the same direction.

*RP: HEFCE has also announced that it plans to introduce an OA policy, which is likely to prioritise green. And the EC last week issued a draft Communication that parallels RCUK’s policy. Can you unpick for me how you expect to see OA develop in the light of these recent developments?*

MH: It will be important to see exactly what HEFCE means by “green”. For the purposes of the 2020 Research Excellence Framework (or its equivalent), HEFCE could merely require that the author’s last version is made available via a repository (a condition that can, of course, be met at present).

Alternatively, they may require open access to a version of record, which will be a big push towards full and upfront APCs. HEFCE (in contrast with the Research Councils) is also going to have to work out what to require for research outputs that can (and must) be submisable, but which are for research not supported with public funds. The details will be important here.

*RP: Ok, thank you for taking time to answer my questions.*

Posted by Richard Poynder at [11:57](#)



## 1 comment:



**Stevan Harnad** said...

### TRAINS THAT PASS IN THE NIGHT

Martin Hall's Q&A reminds me of the (Dostoevsky?) novel in which two strangers meet on a train, get into a conversation, discover that they have a lot in common, and talk animatedly for hours, until they arrive at a

station where one of them says something that immediately makes the other realize that not only do they have next to nothing in common, but that what had seemed like consensus throughout the conversation was all based on systematic misunderstandings from the very first word onward!

Martin Hall and I do not mean the same thing by Open Access (OA) -- let alone Green OA -- nor the problem OA is intended to solve, nor how to solve it, nor how important and urgent it is to solve it, nor why; nor do we agree about the relative importance and urgency of access to the version of record, or of re-use, or of copyright retention, or over-publication, or minimizing embargoes, or publication reform, or Gold OA. Nor do we agree about the UK's optimal role in the global OA movement.

Martin thinks " 'green' is a messy category " Let's see if a simple definition helps: Authors deposit the refereed final draft of their articles in a repository immediately upon acceptance for publication and make it immediately OA (un-embargoed). That is Green OA.

A Green OA mandate, however, has to live within a constraint, namely, the fact that although 60% of journals already endorse immediate OA today, 40% still demand an embargo of various lengths before the deposit is made OA. The compromise -- called the Immediate-Deposit/Optional-Access or ID/OA Mandate -- is to require immediate deposit and to urge (but not require) immediate OA.

Once ID/OA is universally mandated by all institutions and funders worldwide, the rest of what we hope for will take care of itself quite naturally, of its own accord (with the help of the Button, the increasingly palpable benefits of OA, and human nature).

If we instead over-reach, with Martin and Finch, pre-emptively, for far less urgent and important and above all less reachable desiderata -- such as the version of record, re-use rights, copyright retention, over-publication control, minimizing embargoes, publication reform, or Gold OA -- instead of adopting focused, effective and unambiguous ID/OA mandate, we have many more years of wandering in the desert before us.

Nor do Martin and I agree about the UK's optimal role in the global OA movement, which (for me) is to adopt a practical, effective, scalable mandate model, suitable for emulation by the rest of the world, rather than a costly local solution that the rest of the world cannot and will not emulate (and is unlikely to succeed in the UK either).

The UK Select Committee got it right in 2004: UK funders and institutions should *all* mandate Green OA (we're only about 40% there, and most of the mandates are not ID/OA) and subsidize Gold OA only on an experimental basis.

Let's not drop the ball in 2012, but speed its motion. That and only that will re-affirm the UK's leadership in the movement for global OA.

July 27, 2012 6:57 pm 

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